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Editorials...

Library Grant: Tribute to Hard Work, Dedication

It's taken over a decade, but what was once characterized as a "fantasy" evolved into a dream and, ultimately, a success story for library advocates Debbie Bornheimer and Jane Bradley. They not only marshaled town meeting support for more than \$1 million this year, but won a coveted state grant for \$2.1 million when library construction funds were released last Thursday. These commitments, on top of an earlier \$200,000 from the federal government, should persuade potential private investors that the public sector's been more than willing to do its part.

To describe this multiple-year feat as anything short of a labor of love would miss the point. Most residents use the library and some are occasionally quick to criticize what this small, cramped, and badly designed facility has had to offer. But as with any other public service, when the time comes to roll up the sleeves and get something done, there are remarkably few volunteers.

Bornheimer and Bradley have been there through the worst and the best of this project, never giving up, always searching for ways to get the point across, always looking for some new or different approach that would keep supporters committed and win over the doubters, let alone the opponents. It has been a brilliant but extremely taxing public relations campaign. And it paid off.

Like any previous, successful endeavors to convince taxpayers to spend, the library expansion needed a good selling job. It has been up against fiscally tight years when town boards and committees refused to recommend that town meeting beg or borrow for a major construction project when schools were suffering under the weight of inadequate local revenues and a stingy legislature with a barren state treasury. Strategy forums, breakfast meetings, an awful lot of cultivating and a will to muster many thousands in private pledges meant that library supporters had to balance being in the forefront of Duxbury's thinking without becoming a nuisance. If they'd backed off entirely until the "perfect" fiscal year came along, they would never have been prepared to compete for either federal library funds or the lion's share financing the state was finally able to offer.

Unlike several of the communities that also received grant awards last week, Duxbury has its house in order. Except for the remaining private dollars to be raised, the town's capital contribution is in hand. Together with the state grant, this means our construction phase can go forward much more rapidly than most of the other grant recipients. The extent to which Duxbury had gone to line up other project sources no doubt helped state officials decide that a grant here was a smart investment. Barring some unforeseen problem, our "groundbreaking" should happen sooner.

Duxbury Clipper, Wednesday, July 19, 1995

When the library trustees moved to create a new library by rehabilitating the former Alden School, there were many detractors. They said it would cost too much. They wondered what the town would do with the existing library building, and held that up as a barrier. Some even said Duxbury should build an all-new library as the cheapest possible solution to the space problem. Everybody had an opinion about Alden School, and much of it wasn't favorable.

Bornheimer, a former trustee and long-time officer of the Friends of the Library, and Bradley, who was elected to the board of trustees several years ago, shored up support for the concept even as such opponents as town buildings committee members complained that Alden School was a bad plan. Most people disagreed, due in large part to a carefully orchestrated strategy to put facts, not conjecture, in front of voters who would ultimately decide the fate of the project. They made the right decision at town meeting this year.

It is understood that 2 persons alone cannot make a multi-million dollar project happen. Bornheimer and Bradley had lots of supporters and allies, and their ranks grew as the need for a new library went from lip service to a shared community belief. Some people have put in a little time and effort as they could, others have labored long and hard to help bring us to the point that the state grant finally came through. But every campaign like this one takes leadership and an undiverted focus. For not throwing in the towel a long time ago, Duxbury should be grateful to Debbie and Jane.

The Clipper certainly is.